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Turk: Zoning our green space for embassies contradicts city and NCC goals

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Patricia Turk

Mar 29, 2021 • 4 hours ago • 3 minute read • [Join the conversation](#)

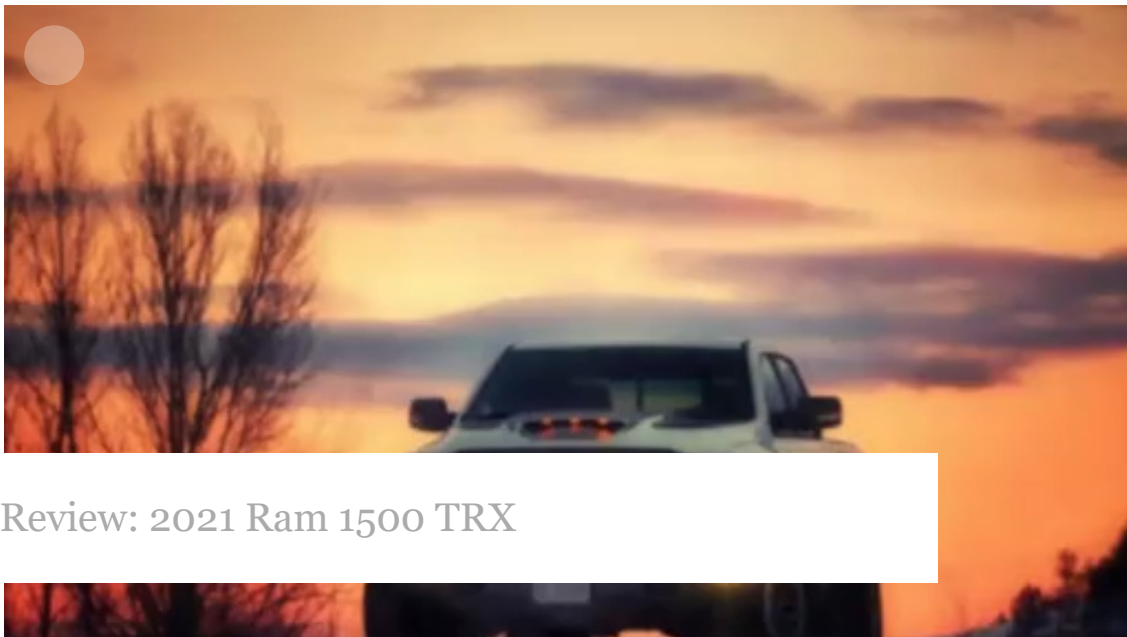




An area of land in Mechanicsville north of Burnside Avenue could be reserved by the NCC for six future embassies. PHOTO BY JULIE OLIVER /Postmedia

The City of Ottawa presented a webinar on Climate Change and the Ottawa Official Plan 2020-2025 last month. The concept of the “15-minute neighbourhood,” the climate emergency, and the importance of green spaces for healthy communities were discussed.

Similarly, the National Capital Commission posted its Forest Strategy 2021-2026, stating that “urban forests have a significantly higher value per hectare per year than rural forests due to the importance of isolated urban forests in providing ecosystem services” and that “within its urban setting there should be equitable access to urban parks, woodlands and forests.”



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HOWEVER, CONTRARY TO BOTH THE CITY PLAN AND THE FOREST STRATEGY, THE NCC IS requesting that the city rezone a 3.7-hectare green space in Mechanicsville (east of Forward Avenue, west of Slidell Avenue) for six future embassies. The plans are so vague that the zoning would allow the buildings to be between four and 10 storeys, with a multitude of uses including office space and parking lots. This broad

rezoning would fetch the highest price for this open green space when the NCC sold to a foreign country or private developer.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

At this Mechanicsville location, Canadians are provided a magnificent view over the Ottawa River; it contains 226 mature trees, of which nearly 85 per cent would be eliminated. A Great Horned Owl with two owlets, a falcon and the threatened Canadian warbler frequent the area. All habitat for wildlife would be displaced and most natural vegetation would be destroyed if the NCC implemented this plan.

Mechanicsville has one park (Laroche Park) containing sports fields rented by the city. This sports park is threatened by overuse from the increasing density of high-rise towers and infills surrounding it. In the next five years, 3,500 resident units will be added to the area (Trinity Development, Bayview Station, Parkdale Avenue), plus an unknown number from the redevelopment of Tunney's Pasture and Mechanicsville infills. This quadruples our population. These future residents will need green spaces, and the NCC green space is the only semi-natural area left in our community.

Ottawa's Greenspace Master Plan provides minimum standards for green space.

saying “all homes will be within 400 metres of a greenspace, or roughly a five-minute walk.” The NCC’s Forest Strategy states: “Evaporation from a single tree can produce a cooling effect of up to 10 room-sized air conditioners operating 20 hours/day.” Trees lower localized temperatures by up to 12 degrees C. Cooling effects, magnified by the tree canopy, block ultraviolet rays and provide shade. The

city wants to increase its tree canopy from 31 to 40 per cent by 2040. Doctors, realizing the value of green spaces, are writing “park prescriptions” for everything from anxiety to cardio-vascular issues.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The NCC has failed to plant 100,000 trees as specified in this plan, partly due to lack of suitable sites for planting trees and partly due to lack of resources. This is an opportunity for the NCC to plant trees that are needed to meet its target. Should the NCC fail in its role as steward of the land, the Mechanicsville Community Association has committed to working with it, the city and the community to raise money for tree-planting and ongoing maintenance of trees for this ecologically valuable and health-promoting green space in Mechanicsville.

If these unnatural, walled, iron-fenced, security-monitored fortresses called “embassies” are built, they will stand apart from the pastoral landscape of the path and parkway along the Ottawa River. They will stand out in stark contrast with the NCC’s expressed goals and the glaring reality of what it actually does, and what the country needs.

There is an urgent need to act now on the climate emergency. Any project that does

not align itself with valuing our environment should be shelved.

Patricia Turk is a resident of Mechanicsville and a member of a Mechanicsville working group against the NCC's application to develop and rezone the area east of Forward Avenue and west of Slidell Avenue and north of Burnside Avenue. For

information on Mechanicsville's opposition to the NCC proposal, contact: mechanicsvilleca@gmail.com . Our gofundme is at: <https://gofund.me/7c990ee7>



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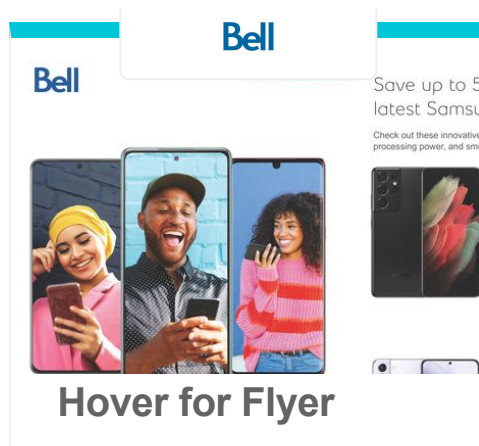
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